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ABSTRACT

A learning disability teacher consultant to a school district implemented a practicum designed to counter a gradual decline in involvement of parents of children in kindergarten through third grade. Practicum goals were to: (1) increase parents' knowledge and understanding of school program goals and activities in order to maximize the effectiveness of interventions with the children; (2) encourage parental involvement in the ongoing activities of the primary school program; and (3) increase parenting skills and help parents become facilitators of their children's development. A needs assessment survey of teachers and parents was administered. A need for workshops, seminars, dissemination of information, newsletters, and parenting skills development was identified. Workshops and an Active Parenting seminar were planned and supervised. Radio and public television announcements, newspaper articles and advertisements, newsletters, and notices sent home with students were used to encourage parental involvement. Evaluation data indicated that the practicum was a positive experience for participating teachers and parents. Related materials including: introductory letters, the parent needs assessment, the staff survey, the state commissioner's letter, parent needs assessment results, staff survey results, parent involvement evaluation, the parent sign-in scheet, the newsletter information sheet and a memo to primary school teachers are appended. (RH)

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IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL THROUGH INCREASED PARENTAL AWARENESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PARENTING SKILLS

BY

ELLEN M. WRIGHT

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IMPROVING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL THROUGH INCREASED PARENTAL AWARENESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF PARENTING SKILLS

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Ellen M. Wright

Cluster XXVI-A

A Practicum I Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1988

JUL 28 '88

PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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June 30, 1988
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This practicum report was submitted by Ellen M. Wright under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

7-28-88
Date of Final Approval of Report

JoEllen Salce Rogers
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ABSTRACT

Improving Parental Involvement in the Primary School Through Increased Parental Awareness and Development of Parenting Skills. Wright, Ellen M., 1988: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Parent Role/Parent Participation/Parent Teacher Cooperation/Parent School Relationship//Elementary Education/Parenting Programs/ Parent-Teacher Association/Parent Involvement/ Parent Education/Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parental awareness and involvement in the education of their children is very important not only for the parent, but especially for the child's benefit. Therefore, the first goal of this practicum was to increase the Primary School's parents' knowledge and understanding of program goals and activities in order to maximize the effectiveness of their interventions with their children. The second goal was to encourage parental involvement in the ongoing activities of the Primary School program. The third goal was to increase the Primary School parents' general knowledge of parenting skills and to help them to be facilitators in their child's development.

The writer administered a needs assessment survey to teachers and to parents; determined a need for workshops/seminars, dissemination of information, newsletters, and parenting skills development; planned and supervised workshops and disseminated information on programs and activities in the Primary School; planned and supervised Active Parenting seminar; encouraged parental involvement through radio and public television announcements, newspaper articles and advertisements, and newsletters/notices sent home with children; developed and administered evaluation format.

In analyzing parental response to the parent involvement evaluations for each activity, the practicum proved to be a positive experience for both teachers and parents who participated. Teachers indicated that the use of the classroom newsletters helped them to communicate better with the parents of the children in their classrooms. The parents rated newsletters as an excellent method for making parents aware of program goals and activities, as well as ongoing activities of the Primary School program. Parents found the program workshops and parenting seminars to be very good, and offered specific and constructive suggestions for planning future workshops.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The school district in which this practicum took place is in a seashore resort community which is dependent upon tourist patronage. This city has experienced a steady growth in "year-round" population at a 6% annual rate over the past five years. Today, the community has a year-round population of approximately 17,000 residents which rises to about 150,000 between Memorial Day and Labor Day. There appears to be a continuing trend of converting summer homes into year-round homes. The population median age has risen to a 1985 projection of 52 years old.

Available land has dwindled rapidly as the number of dwellings built annually have decreased by 60% in the past nine years. Real estate prices have increased at about the rate of 12% annually and property ownership continues to turn over at an approximate rate of every five years. With the establishment of the casino industry in a neighboring resort city, the current trends, will probably continue to increase over the next ten years. In contrast the population median age is predicted to drop within the upper 40 year old range by the turn of the century.

The community is generally considered to be "wholesome" and family-oriented. In 1986 the 100-year old Blue Laws were loosened to include optional Sunday openings of stores and amusement facilities, much to the chagrin of the town fathers. However, the sale of liquor in the resort area is still prohibited.

The school district consists of three separate school buildings, and a suite of rented offices for the Superintendent, the Curriculum Coordinator, and the Board of Education on the third floor of a neighborhood bank building. The three schools include: Primary (Kindergarten through Third Grades), Intermediate (Fourth through Eighth Grades), and High School (9th Grade through 12th Grades). In addition the school district is responsible for screening, assessment and placement of "at risk" 3-to-5-year-olds, and those children eligible for special services ages 3 through 21, including those who may attend private schools in the city. The majority of students are from middle class families with fairly equal distribution among the upper and lower socioeconomic classes.

Author's Work Setting and Role

The Primary School, the school in which this practicum was implemented, has also experienced slow, but steady growth paralleling the community's growth. The student population has increased from approximately 300 students in 1977 to 504 students at the start of this practicum. The school houses 131 half-day kindergarten students, 129 first graders, 122 second graders, and 122 third graders. The primary school population is composed of approximately 91% Caucasian, 7% Black, and less than 2% Hispanic or other racial or ethnic group. The student population is not significantly weighted in regard to the male/female ratio.

The general socioeconomic make-up of the primary school is middle class, similar to the school district as a whole. A relative balance exists between the upper and lower echelons. Students come from areas containing homes selling for $400,000, as well as from government suppported housing projects. About 18% (88) of the primary students come from families eligible for government programs, such as free lunches, as determined by criteria established by governmental organizations. Parents' occupations range from highly skilled technical workers, doctors, lawyers, educators,

blue collar workers, and the like to dependent child recipients, and those receiving welfare.

The Primary School is a part of the local school district, controlled by the local district Board of Education. The district Board of Education is answerable to the State Board of Education. Both Board's of Education are comprised of elected officials from the local citizenry. The State Board of education established the rules and regulations for the public school districts, but the local school district must establish its own standards and policies to comply with these mandates, and see that they are implemented appropriately.

The school district's philosophy emphasizes all aspects of the intellectual, ethical, social, aesthetic, political and physical needs of the student. In addition, each school's objectives provide for individual differences among students through specific goal statements and objectives designed to meet individual needs, interests and career aspirations. Within the guidelines of the approved curriculum, the teaching staff helps each child to achieve his potential in a challenging and encouraging atmosphere. The Parent-Teacher Association, works within the school and the community to facilitate more effective communication between parents and staff.

The primary school administration consists of one principal. There is one certified guidance counselor employed during this school year for the first time at this school. This guidance counselor works with the Kindergarten through Grade 3 and counsels children through their four years of the primary school experience.

In addition the main office of the district Special Services is adjacent to the primary school building. There is one Director of Special Services, an administrative position. There are three district-wide, state certified Learning Disability Teacher-Consultants (LDT-C's), three district-wide, state certified School Psychologists, and two district-wide, state certified School Social Workers who make-up the current district Child Study Team (CST). One LDT-C and one School Psychologist are building-based for the Primary school. Each building is supplemented by other CST personnel as needed. There are also three district-wide, state certified Speech and Language Therapists/Clinicians who are also building-based, and supplemented by their colleagues as needed. At the current time there is one full-time Speech/Language Therapist/Clinician at the Primary School who is supplemented by a second Therapist, two full days a week.

All of the Special Services staff, including the Director, hold a master's degree or higher. Three of the Special Services staff members are enrolled in fully-accredited doctoral programs.

The faculty is composed of 29 teachers. All teachers are assigned to classes in their area of certification, Elementary: Kindergarten through Grade 8. There are 28 females and one male on the primary teaching faculty. Of this number all 29 are Caucasian. There are no other racial or specific ethnic groups represented on the faculty. Nineteen members of the faculty have taught ten years or more, eight have taught 3 to 10 years and two have taught less than two years. Eight teachers hold a master's degree or higher.

The Primary School houses six half-day Kindergarten classes (Three Teachers), one Pre-First Grade or Transitional Class, five 1st-grade classrooms, five 2nd-grade classrooms, and five 3rd-grade classrooms. Supplementing the regular teaching staff are: one Art Teacher, one Music Teacher, one Physical Education Teacher, two Basic Skill Improvement Program (BSIP) Teachers for Reading, one BSIP Teacher for Mathematics, one Gifted & Talented Program Teacher, two Learning Resource Center Teachers who are certified

Teachers of the Handicapped, and one Supplemental Teacher.

Primary classes are generally grouped at random with some attention given to the previous year's teacher recommendation. Most students take reading, mathematics, spelling, handwriting, language arts, social studies, science, art, music and physical education within the regular program. The average pupil/teacher ratio is 1:26.

Special education students may have replacement services of individual subject areas, such as reading, mathematics and language arts in the Learning Resource Center (LRC), or they may have services which support or supplement their regular classroom instruction in a particular area within the LRC. There are no self-contained in-district programs at the Primary School level at the present time. Approximately 32 special needs students are presently being served through the LRC program, including the Learning Disabled, the Emotionally Disturbed and the Communicationally Handicapped. A few students who have special needs which require a full-time program are currently being provided with an out-of-district program in accredited special schools, meeting their Individual Educational Program (IEP) needs through a placement which is their least restrictive environment.

Special needs of children are identified early through the preschool and kindergarten screening processes conducted through the department of special services. As a result, potential learning, physical, speech/language, motor, and/or social/emotional problems can be identified and addressed early, and either be avoided or remediated before they become a more serious handicap. In addition enrichment activities can be provided for those students who have lacked exposure to an organized preschool curriculum, or who may be developmentally slower, so that their adjustment to the Primary School may be successful.

Students who are identified as Gifted & Talented (G/T) are exposed to enrichment activities within the PACE Program in addition to their regular program. The Basic Skills Improvement Program was designed for those students who fall below the 25th percentile on the group standardized test, the California Achievement Test, which is administered annually, or those students who through classroom performance and teacher recommendation have exhibited the need for remedial math or reading classes. The students who are eligible for these special programs are determined through state and local guidelines.

The writer functions as a district-wide Learning Disability Teacher Consultant or LDT-C, building-based

at the district high school. The writer supplements the primary school program in her roles as observer, intervention strategist, educational diagnostician, educational consultant to teachers, parents, administrators and students, curriculum program planner, and designer of instructional strategies, techniques and methods for children with special needs ages 3 through 21. Her professional development is encouraged through inservices, seminars and workshops as participant, facilitator and/or leader.

The writer holds a Bachelor's Degree in Child Development, a Master of Education in Special Education, and an Educational Specialist Degree (M.Ed. + 60 credits) in Learning Disabilities. She is certified by the Department of Education in the following areas: Reading Teacher, Early Childhood Teacher, Elementary Education: Grades K through 8, Teacher of the Handicapped (Pre-K through Grade 12), Learning Disability Teacher-Consultant (Pre-K through Grade 12), and Supervision (and Curriculum). She has recently applied for additional certification for: Supervision--Principal, as well as School Psychologist. All areas of certification include a specialization in early childhood and special education.

The writer has recently completed her 14th year in education. The past six years have been in this school

district as a Learning Disabilty Specialist, ages 3 to 21. During this time, the writer has been active in school-related programs at the local level. She has served as Co-Chairperson of the School District Special Education Curriculum Committee for five years. She has also served for six years on the district Annual Plan Committee for Special Education. She has been a member of the Advisory Council for the County Vocational School Program and the Special Education Committee there for six years. The writer is also a member of the State and County Chapters of the Association for Children/Adults with Learning Disabilities, and acted in an advisory capacity during the County Chapters first year of operation during the 1986-87 school year. For 12 years she has been an active member of the state Association of Learning Consultants and has served on workshop planning committees during that time.

The writer has helped to coordinate the Primary School annual participation in the County and State Tournament of Champions for the Learning Disabled over the past six years. She has been involved for the past 15 years as coach and coordinator for the Tournament while employed in other educational capacities throughout the state. The writer has served in the past six years on the physical education, music, social

studies and testing district-wide curriculum committees.

The writer was named to "Who's Who in American Writers, Poets, and Editors" for the 1986/1987, and 1987/1988 edition. She recently graduated from the Institute of Children's Literature Writing Program (1987), and has been recommended by her instructor for the graduate writing program. She has authored both special education and early childhood curriculum, Learning Activity Packages (LAP), as well as short stories, and educational articles. She is currently working on a book for special needs students to become better acquainted with their learning abilities, and their disabilities.

The writer was recently included in "Who's Who in American Education" for 1987/1988 and awarded a plaque. She has been an active member of the local, state and National Educational Association for ten years, the National Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (NASCD) for nine years, the National Association (and County Chapter) for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for four years, and the Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) for three years. She is also a life-time member of Delta Epsilon Sigma (DES), a National College Honor Society, since 1974.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

In May, 1987, this writer, in preparation for this first practicum, contacted the Primary School Principal, the Intermediate School Principal, the Director of Special Services and the retiring Superintendent of Schools for an interview. During the course of each of the interviews the writer defined the purpose of the practicum, as well as the goals of the practicum component and the practicum phases. The writer asked each of the administrators involved to address at least three problem areas or situations which they would feel comfortable in her investigating, planning and implementing solution strategies for within the school district. Each of the administrators cited diverse problems and situations, but all unanimously specified parental involvement as a common problem.

During the summer, the writer notified the Principal of the Primary School and the Director of Special Services of her decision to investigate the parent involvement problem within the Primary School setting once approval of the Practicum Problem Questionnaire (PPQ) had been obtained. At this point

both administrators suggested that the writer sit down with the new Superintendent of Schools in September, 1987, so that his approval may be obtained before further investigation took place. After meeting with the new Superintendent, explaining the program and obtaining approval for the practicum project, the writer was able to seek further documentation of the practicum problem. The Superintendent asked to be made aware of each phase of the project, and to receive copies of any information which would be forwarded to the parents or staff for his perusal before distribution.

Over the past five years the school district has observed a gradual decline in parental involvement within their children's educational programs, particularly at the Primary (K through 3) grade levels. Although exact figures were not made available to this writer, the Principal indicated a gradual reduction in attendance at Parent-Teacher Association Meetings and bi-annual Parent-Teacher Conferences. Generally, the Principal sees her teachers having difficulty with contacting parents by telephone, and a lack of parental response to written correspondence from the teacher.

A needs assessment of school district parents (Appendix B) and a staff survey (Appendix C) was developed and conducted along with a letter of

introduction (Appendix A) by this writer during September and October of this year. The data obtained (Appendices E & F) revealed a general lack of teacher-parent and parent-school communication within the Primary School. Parents indicated that they are generally unaware of support services which are available to them throughout the school. Parents would like more specific information about classroom activities, specific school programs, after school programs, and extra-curricular activities. They also requested resources and printed materials on alternative lifestyles, such as two-parent working families, step-families and single parent households. Parents expressed an overall need for greater knowledge of parenting skills related to time management, discipline, and teaching their children greater respect for authority, to name a few, and most teachers concurred with these observations.

The PTA has attempted during the past few years to increase publicity for their meetings and events. An effort has been made to make the PTA meetings less "business-oriented" and more practically-oriented towards parents' needs. But, parent attendance seems to improve during the Back-To-School Night, September or October Meeting, only to decline once again over the school year. Child Care services have been offered

during Parent Conference times to encourage parents to attend, yet overall attendance at these meetings has not improved. In addition, the Primary School Principal makes home visitations when it is absolutely necessary to obtain parent support or involvement concerning their child for a specific reason.

If this problem were solved the school district would see greater awareness and involvement of parents in the education of their children, in particular, the primary school, and increased knowledge of parenting skills. Briefly stated then, the problem was that the school district, in particular, the primary school, had shown decreased awareness and involvement by parents in the education of their children and a lack of awareness of appropriate parenting skills.

Problem Documentation

The problem had been documented through the Introductory Letter (Appendix A), the Parent Needs Assessment (Appendix B) and the Staff Survey (Appendix C) developed by the writer from a review of the literature. Interviews with the Primary School Principal and the Director of Special Services were

also accomplished, as cited previously. Appendix D also contains a letter from the State Commissioner of Education documenting the statewide problem. Results of the Parent Needs Assessment and the Staff Survey are contained in Appendices E and F respectively.

The Parent Needs Assessment was distributed to 504 students in the Primary School to be taken home to their parents. Thirty-five percent (178) of those assessments distributed were returned. Of that 35%, 40% or 73 parents indicated that they had more than one student in the Primary School and had completed only one assessment. Twenty-six percent (19) indicated that there were more than two students attending the Primary School. Therefore, 30% (54) of those responding had two or more children attending the Primary School. Thirty-two of the Needs Assessments were given out to parents of students with special needs, 19% or six parents completed and returned the special needs parents page.

The Staff Survey was distributed to 35 teachers and CST members. Sixty-five percent (23) staff members responded, 35% (12) did not respond.

Of the 178 returned Needs Assessments, 40% of the parents said that they were members of the PTA, while 57% indicated that they were not members. Of those parents who answered in the negative most indicated a

displeasure with the overall operation of the PTA. In the Staff Survey, 60% of the teachers indicated that they belonged to the PTA, while 40% said that they were not members. Several staff members cited that the teacher's contract did not require them to be members of the PTA.

In the Staff Survey 60% of the staff members answered "Yes" to the statement: Parent involvement is a problem in the Primary School. Thirty-four percent of the teaching staff send home classroom newsletters. Most (75%) of these newsletters are sent home on a monthly basis. During parent conference time, 10 teachers or 43% indicated that parent attendance was over 70%. Teachers feel that parents are willing to take responsibility for helping with class trips, classroom parties, and fund raisers. The teachers also feel that most parents are willing to take responsibility for attendance at parent conferences, Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings, and Eligibility for Special Services Meetings. The teachers listed what they felt to be the two most important needs of parents: 1) To spend more quality time or to take more interest in their children and their educational program (39%); 2) To develop more appropriate parenting skills (30%). The remainder of the "parent needs" as the teachers see them are listed

on the second page of the Staff Survey Results (Appendix F). The teachers were also asked to list two ways which they believed that the Primary School staff could help parents to meet these needs. Seventy-three percent wrote that sharing information, disseminating materials, developing activities and ideas through parenting newsletters, handouts, and pamphlets should be attempted. Videos, inservices, and workshops on parenting skills were cited by 56% of the staff, and 39% said that parents and teachers should increase their communication skills.

The Needs Assessment showed that parents do not feel that support services are adequate enough in terms of parent workshops/seminars (57%), parent group counselling (33%), and parent discussion groups (29%). Thirty-two percent (32%) of the parents want to see more parent volunteers in the classroom and the school. Resources and printed materials for parents with alternate lifestyles were requested by 38% of the parents. Forty-two percent of the parents wish to see more regular classroom newsletters, and 34% of the parents feel that the Parent/Student Handbook is inadequate in its present form and in need of revision. Parents appeared generally pleased with the types of conferencing available within the Primary School. However, 32% of the parents surveyed preferred Monday

through Friday, after school time, 3:00 to 7:00 P.M. appointments which are not presently always available because of teacher contract constraints. Another 29% requested conference times other than 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. or 3:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. because of their unusual work schedules.

Most parents (82%) expect to better understand what happens in their child(ren)'s class/school activities or programs through increased involvement in the school or class program. Others (51%) would like to become more aware of school/classroom curriculum, in particular what their children are being taught in school. There are parents (50%) who would like to increase communication with the school and teachers in particular through conferences and discussion groups. Forty-six percent of the parents would like to gain in knowledge and understanding of parenting skills, in particular, understanding and managing behavior, understanding and encouraging children, communication, confidence, respect for others, etc.... Still others (44%) would like to help their children to grow in self-esteem, enthusiasm, motivation and interest for school. Forty-three percent of the parents would like to observe how their children function away from the home environment, and how they interact with peers and teachers throughout the school day.

The parents were asked what parent involvement activities they would be most interested in participating in during this year. Forty-four percent of the parents would like to hear speakers and receive information on various educational topics of interest, such as: The Primary School Gifted and Talented Program (40%), Social-Emotional Development (38%), and Speech and Language Development (35%). One of the most popular write-in topics was advice and information for working parents (32%).

A letter dated, September, 1987, from the State Commissioner of Education (Appendix D) addressed to all public school employees in the State of New Jersey confirmed the need "to enhance public awareness of the importance of parental support to students' achievement" (Cooperman, 1987). The State of New Jersey is currently waging a multi-media campaign encouraging parents to make a greater committment to their children's educational programs. This is only Phase One of a three phase program. Phase Two will recognize already existing parent involvement programs which have proven to be successful. While Phase Three will address pilot projects to increase parent involvement in the public schools.

Causative Analysis

The problem of parents not being fully involved in their children's educational programs at the Primary School has many suspected causes. The most important and most noticeable cause appeared to be the time constraints of both parents and school staff. This is particularly noticeable in scheduling kindergarten orientation, conferences, workshops and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. Time management problems with both parents and teachers are apparently due to diverse parent work schedules and related child care difficulties in single parent, as well as two parent families. This was noted specifically in the Needs Assessment where 61% of the parents surveyed indicated that for the most part they are unavailable to meet with or talk to teachers during the 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. school day.

A second major cause of this problem is the absence of initial classroom/school orientation for transferring students or their parents. And, related to this probable cause, is a growing transiency problem. Parents of new students to the Primary School are not required to have an appointment to register. They are asked to complete a school registration form with the assistance of the school attendance secretary

or the new guidance counselor. If the new counselor is available she talks with the student and parent briefly to answer any questions that they may have. Immunization records are checked by the school nurse, and the child is assigned to a classroom. The parent is handed a school policy booklet, and asked to sign and return the last page indicating receipt of the booklet. If the student is a kindergarten student, he/she will be screened by the Speech/Language Therapist, the Physical Education Teacher, and the Learning Disability Teacher-Consultant after he/she has had a chance to adjust to the new classroom setting. There is no other initial classroom or school orientation for the transfer student or parent at the present time, nor is there a screening or organized placement procedure. A new student is generally placed in classrooms containing the least number of students in her particular grade level.

Since the city is a resort community there is a great availability of winter rentals at a very reasonable monthly rate. This availability attracts a transient population to the community who generally enter in late September or early October and leave before June 1, or shortly after, if they are fortunate enough to get winter rental through the school year. The norm is an October 1 to May 31 rental period which

results in a problem for school officials, as well as the student who may be missing out on a good portion of his/her school year. In general the transients are white, single parent families or two parent working families who show little involvement with the school activities, usually due to their unusual work schedules and child care problems. Many of the more inexpensive winter rentals are in the 40th and 50th Street area, while the school is in the 6th Street block, creating more problems for parents with one car or other transportation difficulties, and further limiting their school involvement.

A third major cause of the problem could be the lack of effective School-Public Relations, in particular, multi-media advertising of school events and activities. The local radio and TV stations, as well as local newspapers do not appear to be used effectively to promote school activities. Occasionally public service announcements broadcast upcoming events, but seldom is follow-up of these events publicized at the primary level.

A fourth major cause of the problem seems to be insufficient dissemination of knowledge and materials which could promote parental awareness of school and classroom activities. Examples of this as cited by the parents is the poor distribution of classroom

information, ie. newsletters, and the inadequate information found in the Parent/Student Handbook. Resources and printed materials for parents with alternate lifestyles, in particular the very young parent, the divorced or single parent, the working parent are not readily available in the Primary School at the present time. The present physical facility does not have a library in which these materials could be stored for student, teacher or parent use.

The Related Literature

Parent involvement with a child's learning experiences has been long observed by school teachers as a vital factor in a child's school success (Henderson, 1987; Honig, 1987). Parent-teacher interactions have been found to affect children's learning both postitively and negatively. Research on teacher attitudes has shown that where teachers "exhibited greater respect than other teachers for the child's family" this was positively associated with the child's willingness to profit from classroom educational experiences (Beller, 1969, p.39).

Therefore, parent involvement is essential to program success. Parents should be given the opportunity to participate in the decision making

process governing the school's philosophy and operation. Parents should be aware of the school's educational programs and be able to observe their child in the school setting when mutually convenient. When parents are knowledgeable of the educational programs and actively support them, their children are more likely to feel comfortable and eager to learn (Honig, 1987). Increased parent self-esteem and feelings of control are a direct outgrowth of parent involvement says Nebgin (1979).

Coletta (1977) recognizes five components of parent involvement programs:

(1) Home-school comm nication;

(2) Classroom tasks;

(3) Parent Awareness groups;

(4) Policy making; and

(5) Home-based curriculum.

Though a hierarchy was not planned, Coletta feels that the home-school communication component should be the first attempted, since it encourages an opening of trust-building channels. The other components, therefore, fall into place more naturally.

Gordon (1969, 1976) and associates (Gordon, Olmstead, Rubin, True, 1979) also see parent involvement at several different levels or components:

1. Parents as an audience (passive role---conferences, newsletters, etc.) (Home-School Communication).

2. Parents as a reference (active role---insights and perspectives on their child; Parent Awareness)

3. Parents as the teacher of the child (Home-Based Curriculum).

4. Parents as volunteers in the classroom (Classroom Tasks).

5. Parents as trained/paid aides (Classroom Tasks).

6. Parents as participants in the decision-making process (Policy Making).

Pawlas (1985) explored several ways to promote effective communication between school personnel and their parents. As a parent and principal of the Leaphart Elementary School in Columbia, Pawlas offers an educational program that challenges all pupils, and in addition works to produce students with positive attitudes. Some of the communication methods which are employed by the Leaphart School staff include a monthly Principal's Newsletter, a School Improvement Council (advisory council), Parent/Citizen School Visits and Lunch with the Children, to name only a few. As principal, Pawlas sets the tone for his school personnel, parents and the community. Pawlas feels that they need to see "his committment to providing quality educational for students".

Gotts and Purnell (1985) found compelling research that "the effect of the home environment on student

achievement exceeds the effect both of schooling and of measured aptitude". Therefore, they feel it essential to reassess the goals of public education and to nurture parental involvement. According to Gotts and Purnell, strong parental involvement depends upon an improved school-family relationship.

Hill (1981) encourages the second component of parent involvement in the classroom through observation. This observation should optimally be done through a one-way mirror, or if unavailable in small groups. Videotapes, films and photographs of students involved in various activities may also serve this purpose. Parent participation in field trip experiences is another learning experience for parents, staff and children which offers the opportunity for parents to observe their child's interactions with other children and their teacher (Swap, 1987).

The Jefferson County Public School Model (Benjamin, Ohanian, and White, 1975) in Colorado advocates a Parent Classroom Volunteer program where all parents are encouraged to volunteer their time at the pre-school through third grade level within the school and the classroom. Parents are carefully oriented to the program prior to classroom entry. Orientation includes inservicing on the use of Individual Activity Packets which each volunteer uses

to help reinforce skills taught by the classroom teacher in one-to-one and small group situations. This is also true of the Project Follow Through in Gainesville, Florida (Gordon, Greenwood, Ware & Olmsted, 1974; Gordon, Olmsted, Rubin & True, 1979). Back in 1961, Hymes, one of America's foremost authorities, first gave this admonition to educators which was echoed in later publications (1975):

> Call in your parents. Draft them. Bring them into your classroom. Turn them into assistant teachers. Make teacher-aides out of them. Every single day have two or three or four parents working right beside you teaching in the classroom with you. Schools and children and teachers need a revolutionary approach right now. We need a device immediately to insure that every child can find some intellectual content that he can master and put to good use. Drafting the help of parents is the only solution that will overnight let the boys and girls in school today have the teacher-pupil ratio that decent education demands (p. 96).

Honig (1987) also advocates the home visitation, parent group meetings as well as the television models. She talks about such children's television programs as Sesame Street, Electric Company, 3-2-1 Contact, and Square One, which present developmental learning activities for pre-school through age 12 with follow-up materials and activities that can be easily utilized by teacher and parent alike.

The Minnesota ECFE Program was instituted by State Senator Jerome Hughes in 1972 through legislation which

he introduced for an Early Childhood Family Education program. The ECFE Program specializes in activities that foster self-esteem for both parents and children. Each participant learns to see themselves as successful, competent and valuable individuals under the watchful eye of a parent educator and a teacher. Each local community decides what type of model program would benefit individual community needs. The St. Cloud's Seton Hall Project, a nationally validated format, is the most common model. The ECFE staff consists of parent-child support trainer and a teacher who coordinates student activities. A room is usually designated for the children's activities, a place for parent group discussions, an office for the director of parent education, and a resource library space for parents and staff. Kristenson and Billman (1987) work respectively as parent educator and parent resource person within the Winona, Minnesota ECFE Program.

The Office of Child Development (OCD) for all Child Development Programs, including Head Start, stipulates that every Head Start program must have effective parent participation (Pavloff and Wilson, 1972; Wilson and Wingate, 1974; O'Keefe, 1978) of an advisory capacity involving problem solving and decision making.

The Jefferson County Public School Model (Benjamin, Ohanian, and White, 1975; B.L. White, 1977, 1979 & 1980) has a policy making group which includes parents within the County known as the County Advisory Board. Each school district within the county has a Parent Advisory Board, as does each individual school. Their purpose is to communicate concerns and suggestions of the parents to teachers, to support educational programs, and to serve as a sounding board for new policies and programs.

Hill (1981) advocates parent activities to affect legislation, regulation and community outreach support for effective programs for children. An advisory council has been formed at the Center for Infancy and Early Childhood at Rutgers University to organize and implement these activities.

Hill (1981), Honig (1987) Coletta (1977) and the Jefferson County Public School Model (Benjamin, Ohanian, and White, 1975; White, 1979 & 1980) all promote the use of home visitation for the purpose of instruction of parents and children, as well as for observation, discussion, providing ideas and materials and orientation of parents. All of the research reviewed here show that children who participate in home-based programs have benefited from the experience. And the benefite derived from home-based programs tend

to last longer than school-based programs and seem to spread to other family members (Silvern, 1975; O'Keefe, 1973 & 1978; Alford, 1972).

Several Federal Home-Based Programs were also reviewed such as the Brookline Early Education Project (BEEP), a foundation funding project. In 1973 while an undergraduate at a neighboring college, this writer participated in this program under the direction of Dr. Burton White, then Director of the Preschool Project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. As a Child Development major specializing in preschool handicapped and in training as a psychodiagnostician this writer assisted as an aide in the administration of comprehensive diagnostic and educational services for children which the pediatrician and psychologist supervised. This project began two weeks before birth and continued at two weeks of age, 3 1/2 months, and 6 1/2 months, 11 months, 14 1/2 months, 24 months and 30 months utilizing the Bayley Scales of Infant Development (Bayley, 1969; Pierson, 1973 & 1974). Follow-up studies were subsequently done with these children as they began formal schooling, and are being conducted as longitudinal studies today. The results of these new studies have not been published to date.

The value of parent involvement programs continues to be questioned by many parents, policy makers and

funding agencies. According to Powell (1986) many feel that "parenting is an instinct and that well-functioning families need little outside advice or help (p. 47)."

Still others question the effectiveness of the different strategies and program approaches on the parent, the child and the staff members as individuals, as well as a group (Bronfenbrenner, 1974 & 1975; Stevens, 1978). How can one account for individual differences in parent program participation and expected outcomes? And how do we keep parents involved once we have their initial support (Zigler & Berman, 1983)?

Other unanswered questions concern the long term effects of parent programs and program follow-up (Clarke-Stewart & Fein, 1983; Zigler & Berman, 1983). How can we best disseminate information on child development to parents? The negative side of parent program involvement has been generally overlooked in much of the literature and needs to be further investigated. Could a given program under certain circumstances undermine a parent's or even a child's self-esteem and therefore become a negative or unproductive experience (Hess, 1980; Billman & Kristenson, 1987)?

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

Parental awareness and involvement in the education of their children is very important not only for the parent, but especially for the child's benefit. Therefore, the first goal of this practicum was to increase the Primary School's parents' knowledge and understanding of program goals and activities in order to maximize the effectiveness of their interventions with their children. The second goal was to encourage parental involvement in the ongoing activities of the Primary School program. The third goal was to increase the Primary School parents' general knowledge of parenting skills and to help them to be facilitators in their child's development.

Behavioral Expectations

An analysis of the Needs Assessment revealed that parents were frequently unaware of the programs and activities available to them and to their children at the Primary School. Much of the literature suggests the use of parent programs aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of school and classroom activities, while at the same time encouraging parent

involvement in the ongoing activities of the school program. With this in mind, the writer chose the first two behavioral objectives. The third behavioral objective was specifically intended to measure the third goal of this practicum, relating to parenting skills, as previously stated in this chapter. As a result, the following behavioral objectives were projected for this practicum.

1. During a period of 12 weeks, the Primary School parents will increase their knowledge and understanding of the programs offered in the Primary School as measured by attaining a 70% positive response for each parent activity on a writer-developed parent involvement evaluation questionnaire (See Appendix G).

2. During a period of 12 weeks, the Primary School parents will be encouraged to become more involved in the ongoing activities of the Primary School as measured by increased attendance at parent-teacher association meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and other group meetings, of a least 50%, as documented by a comparision of monthly meeting attendance reports before, during and after the implementation stage (See Appendices H).

3. During a period of 12 weeks, the Primary School parents will improve their general knowledge of parenting skills and become facilitators in their child's development as measured by attaining a 70% positive response for each parent activity on a writer-developed parent involvement survey (See Appendix G).

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

Events occurred during this practicum which had not been anticipated. These unexpected events were important to the overall outcome of the practicum experience. In order to accomodate these unexpected events, the author kept a journal. The journal entries summarized weekly successes and failures, as well as parent, teacher or administrative concerns regarding the proceedings. The journal entries were reviewed each week in an effort to ensure that all activities progressed satisfactorily.

Evaluation Instruments

The writer measured the attainment of the first objective through a 70% (or better) positive response for each of the planned parent activities on a parent evaluation developed by the author (Appendix G). A positive response was defined as an overall rating of "good" (3) to "excellent" (5) for each activity. Responses were written. Five minutes were allotted at the end of each parent activity so that those in attendance had an opportunity to evaluate the program.

The second objective was measured by increased attendance at parent meetings, of at least 50%. This was documented by a comparison of monthly attendance

reports for January, March, April and May, 1988. Parents were asked to sign-in (Appendix H) for each meeting that they were in attendance. These names were counted by the writer and the total numbers were utilized for documentation purposes only.

The third objective was measured by attaining a 70% postive response on the PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION form (Appendix G) as developed by this author and also used to evaluate the first objective.

Analysis of Data

Each of the objectives were evaluated individually to determine if the specific behavior that was expected had been achieved. Judgement about whether or not the actual objective had been achieved depended upon whether the percentage in the original objective statement had been attained. Responses were compared as in the initial Needs Assessment by percentages per item, and percentages in total response for all parent involvement evaluations relevant to the first and third objectives. This data is presented as Parent Involvement Evaluation Results in Tables 1 and 3.

In analyzing the data of the second objective, a graph is presented (Table 2) which displays the total number of parents in attendance during the

pre-implementation stage, implementation stage, and post-implementation stage over a five month period. This information has been converted into percentages in order to fulfill the purpose of the objective, and presented in a table format within the context of the practicum report.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Parent involvement benefits the educational program. Parents can offer their specialized assistance in terms of projects, activities and sharing their own particular interests and skills. Involved parents are more likely to support program continuation and expansions when they are made aware of various program options (Powell, 1986).

Parent participation is self-gratifying. It satisfies the parent's natural desire to know what and how their children are doing in school. Parents are given the opportunity to observe their children interacting with other children and staff members and to see their home-taught value systems at work. "Parent involvement" or "citizen participation" according to Guttman (1978), is here to stay. Educators should work with parents to develop workable programs which will strongly impact the educational systems.

As educators we must strive to match program content and structure to the needs and characteristics of our parents (Powell, 1983, 1986; Nedler & McAfee,

1979). This aspect of parent education has been the major thrust of this writer's practicum project.

Gotts and Purnell (1985) saw that the partnership of home and school is dependent upon effective communication strategies that work well within the context of the school setting and time schedule. They feel that parents want to know what is going on in the schools. Four methods of communication that they have found especially useful with groups of parents have been: newsletters (Harms & Cryer, 1978), open houses, handbooks and parent organizations. In communicating with parents as individuals some of their methods include phone calls, report cards, formal and informal conferences, home visits, automatic calling devices to notify of absences, and interviews. Bjorklund and Burger (1987) echo the importance of making these parent conferences work for all concerned.

Hill (1981) and Kelly (1981) see group meetings serving many purposes, such as parent discussion groups focusing on mutual experience sharing and problem solving in the home. Information meetings are a vehicle for disseminating information to parents. Guest speakers can be invited to speak to the parents and staff on concerns like those identified by the

Primary School parents: school programs, nutrition, recreation programs, and child abuse.

The Jefferson County Public School Model (Benjamin, Ohanian, and White, 1975) has a parent discussion group which serves an informational function. Their purpose is to help parents to become more familiar with basic concepts of child growth and development, social-emotional development, and to give parents an opportunity to identify and understand their own feelings. A similar program was outlined by Cataldo (1987) through Columbia University to introduce basic child-rearing concepts and parenting skills, to further the education of the parent of the young child. Earhart (1980) defines parent education as those activities and experiences providing interaction and guidelines for the parent. Parent Meetings, Activities Workshops, Back-To-School Programs, Home Visitations, and material distributions are just a few ways in which parent awareness and education can be promoted.

As cited in this literature review, others have solved similar problems in parental involvement through development of parent workshops or seminars, parent discussion groups (Kelly, 1981), parent visitation to the school, dissemination of printed materials, newsletters (Harms & Cryer, 1978) parent/student handbooks, telephone conferences, home visitation, open

houses, parent organizations, homework hotlines and/or parents advisory councils (Swap, 1987).

Professionals have stated that when parents and school staff are involved in a full partnership, student academic achievement rises, student behavior improves, school motivation increases, attendance becomes more regular, and community support is gained (Frymier, 1985; Wolf, 1984). Effective home-school communication leads to mutual respect and trust between parent and teachers and in turn benefits the students involved (Nedler & McAfee, 1979). It has been this writer's desire to affect parent involvement through increased home-school communication and parent awareness within the Primary School by the development of positive solution strategies obtained from this research of the literature.

Description of Selected Solutions

In the needs assessment the Primary School parents voiced a strong need for support in terms of workshops/seminars, counseling and discussion meetings on various topics, as well as printed materials. The parents also recognized the need for regular classroom newsletters, as well as a revision of the

parent/student handbook to include more information about specific school and classroom programs. Since the literature favors activities which specifically meet the given parent population needs, these planned activities were thought to be appropriate to solve the problem.

This writer was prepared to facilitate a six week series of two hour workshops in Parent Enrichment Training, a modified program designed to help parents to become aware of and to use the knowledge that they already possess in developing parenting skills. These workshops were approved by the School Administration through the Night School Curriculum. However, a minimum of 12 participating parents was needed for the workshop in order for this particular workshop to be effective. A minimum of 10 parents was needed to sign-up for the course in order for the school to offer it in the night school program. The parents themselves had requested this type of program. Child care would be offered for those who might desire this service. The third goal of the practicum, to increase the Primary School parents' general knowledge of parenting skills and to help them to be facilitators in their child's development, would be satisfied as a result of this component of the program.

The writer was to monitor parent attendance at Primary School meetings, workshops, and conferences just before, during, and immediately following the 12 week time period. Written documentation was to be reviewed by this writer in order to meet the second goal, to encourage parental involvement in the ongoing activities of the Primary School program.

The writer would attempt to organize a volunteer committee of parents and teachers to revise the Primary School Policy Booklet to include program related services offered to students and parents in a handbook format. Parents have not been satisfied for the most part with the current booklet format, since it did not provide the information that they needed to know, so it was felt that they should be cooperative in the revision process. The first goal which was to increase the Primary School's parents' knowledge of program goals and activities in order to maximize the effectiveness of their interventions with their children, as well as the second goal would be covered through this activity.

The writer would ask a sample of Primary School Teachers to disseminate weekly classroom newsletters during the 12 week period and to evaluate their overall effectiveness. A small cooperative sample of teacher volunteers at each grade level was considered realistic

and workable for this study. Parents had expressed a need in this area and their cooperation was expected. Again, the first and second goals would be satisfied through this activity.

The writer would disseminate printed materials and facilitate workshops/seminars during the 12 week period addressing the four highest priority topics listed by the Primary School parents: (1) Gifted and Talented programs, (2) Speech/Language Development, (3) Managing Children's Behavior, and (4) Social-Emotional Development. Both parents and teachers had expressed a strong need in these areas and many parents were receptive of any information sent home to them. Workshops/seminars needed to be scheduled at early evening times to conform with the wishes of most parents. These workshops/seminars would also satisfy the first goal of this practicum.

Report of Action Taken

The writer registered to teach a class on Thursday nights for six weeks in the district evening school program in Parent Enrichment Training. This course of action had been suggested by the Primary School Principal who directs the Evening School Program. Administrative and School Board approval were

secured. The Evening School Program required a fee of $35 for participants which included tuition and registration. The instructor would be paid a stipend which the writer hoped to use to pay for the cost of materials and supplies for this course and the practicum. However, not one person signed up to take the course during the Evening School Program.

Fortunately, the School Psychologist in the Primary School had been attempting to have a similar program approved through the School Board. This course entitled Active Parenting had been offered in the Evening School program during two previous sessions, and had met with the same response as the writer's program. The School Psychologist obtained approval and offered the Active Parenting program apart from the Evening School program.

Active Parenting is a video-based group discussion program which enables parents to recognize their own situation through true-to-life vignettes and to see better solutions to conflicts. In six two-hour sessions over a span of six weeks the psychologist acted as a facilitator with Michael Popkin's videos in educating parents about good parenting skills and encouraging parental involvement in their children's educations. About ten persons had originally signed up for the class, but only six persons completed the

Active Parenting program. These six persons were actually three sets of parents. The Active Parenting program was evaluated by those in attendance following the completion of the course utilizing the PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION form (Appendix G) designed by this author. Child care was found unnecessary for the parents enrolled for this specific program.

The writer talked to the Superintendent of Schools and the Primary School Principal about monitoring the attendance at parent meetings held before, during and after the 12 week period. The writer consulted with the Primary School PTA president in order to audit attendance at the PTA meetings. These attendance records serve as documentation for this program component (Table 2).

The writer requested permission from the School Superintendent and the Primary School Principal in order to organize the committee to revise the Primary School Policy Booklet. The Superintendent requested that the writer consult with the Primary School Principal on this matter, saying that he would back her decision. However, the Primary School administration did not feel that the Primary School Policy Booklet needed to be revised. The school administration was satisfied with the current format, and did not wish to see it changed at this time.

According to the Primary School principal and the Parent Teacher's Association President (PTA), the Policy Booklet had been revised by the PTA during the 1986-87 school year and had been approved by the School Board for distribution.

The writer designed a newsletter information sheet to distribute to the Primary School teachers (Appendix I) suggesting information that could be included in their newsletters. The Primary School Principal did not feel that it was necessary for the writer to attend a Primary School Staff Meeting. Instead the writer requested teacher volunteers to begin sending out these newsletters on a weekly basis through a letter to the teachers (Appendix J). The volunteer teachers distributed their individual newsletters on a weekly basis for a period of 11 school weeks beginning with week ending March 4, 1988, and ending with May 20, 1988 (Week of April, 1, 1988, through April 8, 1988, was Easter Vacation). The writer used the PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION instrument for the newsletter evaluation (Appendix G) and gave it to the teachers who volunteered to distribute to the parents who participated. Each parent was asked to evaluate the newsletter format by the end of the twelve week period. The evaluation form (Appendix G) was disseminated with

the final newsletter of May 20, 1988, to be returned no later then May 27, 1988.

During four consecutive weeks of the 12 week program, a two-hour workshop/seminar was presented in each of the four subject areas selected by the parents, by a professional(s) who has been trained in that area. At that particular time printed materials were disseminated to supplement each activity. A summary of these materials along with this report will be presented to the school administration for utilization in future updates of the Primary School Policy Booklet. The knowledge and expertise of the professionals involved could be used as references for future Policy Booklet updates. Those in attendance at each workshop/seminar were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of each session upon completion of that session utilizing the PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION form (Appendix G).

The first workshop on Gifted and Talented was presented on April 14, 1988. This two-hour workshop was presented by the Director of Special Services who described the characteristics of the Gifted and/or Talented child and the program criteria for entrance into the program. He briefly discussed curriculum and program development currently available within the Primary School setting. A follow-up workshop was

scheduled for June, 1988, in which the G/T teacher would highlight the purposes of the G/T program in the Primary School, as well as discuss methods and strategies which she uses in classroom instruction. She would also display and describe student work samples and materials. The follow-up workshop idea came about as a result of parent requests in the evaluation process of the April 14, 1988 workshop.

The second workshop on Speech and Language Development was presented on April 21, 1988. Two Speech and Language Therapists who work in the Primary School presented an overview of normal speech and language development from birth to about age eight. They discussed their roles as therapists in the Primary School setting, and the methods and instructional strategies which they employ. The therapists presented the parents with techniques that parents could use in the home to help encourage good speech and language development. Parents presented examples of their own children's speech and language problems and asked the therapists for advice regarding remediation.

The third workshop on Managing Children Behavior was presented on April 28, 1988. Two of the school district Social Workers presented an overview of behaviors exhibited by the young school-age child, approximately Kindergarten through Grade Three. They

presented options for changing children's behavior. The two Social Workers introduced role playing, survey and questionaire, and other hands-on discussion provoking methods in order to communicate to the parents present. The parents in turn provided the group with examples of problematic situations to which the group reacted, role-played and attempted to brainstorm possible solutions.

The fourth workshop on Social-Emotional Development was presented on May 5, 1988 by the same School Psychologist who gave the Active Parenting Workshops. The School Psychologist presented various social relationships of children, their social understanding, and the socialization process beginning at birth through age eight. She presented three theories of social-emotional development and gave concrete examples of each theory as it relates to differing age groups. Parent group discussion centered around play as learning, sex roles and sex differences, the role of the father, day care and nursery school issues, and the impact of media on the primary level child.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

A writer-developed PARENT INVOLVMENT EVALUATION questionnaire (Appendix G) served as the measurement device for Objective One. This PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION form was developed from a review of similar evaluation instruments as found in the review of the literature (Benjamin, Ohanian, & White, 1975; Cataldo, 1987; Clarke-Stewart & Fein, 1983; Coletta, 1977; Frymier, 1985; Hill, 1985; Powell, 1986; Silvern, 1975; Wilson & Wingate, 1974). The specific objective, "During a period of 12 weeks, the Primary School parents will increase their knowledge and understanding of the programs offered in the Primary School as measured by attaining a 70% positive response for each parent activity on a writer-developed parent involvement evaluation questionnaire," was met for each of the five major activities presented. A total of 74 parents completed questionnaires for the five individual activities, and 71 of the 74 or 95% responded with a positive response of at least 80% or better. A positive response had been defined as an overall rating of "good" (3), "very good" (4) or "excellent" (5) for each activity. A negative response

would then be a "fair" (2) or "poor" (1) answer. The five activities included the Classroom Newsletter (Activity #1), and the series of four workshops requested by the parents: the Gifted and Talented Program (Activity #2), Speech and Language Development (Activity #3), Managing Children's Behavior (Activity #4) and Social and Emotional Development (Activity #5). Table 1 summarizes the results of the PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION questionnaires for the five activities.

Table 1. PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION Form Results #1

Activity	#Parents	%Rating				
		5	4	3	2	1
1	39	76%	15%	2%	2%	2%
2	10	10%	10%	60%	10%	10%
3	4	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%
4	14	64%	36%	0%	0%	0%
5	7	57%	43%	0%	0%	0%

Each of two individuals rated the Newsletter activity as "fair", and "poor". The parent who rated the newsletter activity as "fair" indicated that she did so because she had three children in the primary school, and only one of them ever brought home a

newsletter of classroom events. She was hoping that it would not be a "one-time thing" and that all the classrooms in the Primary School would be required by the principal to participate in this activity on at least a weekly basis. She was not happy with the lack of communication between herself and the teachers of her other two children. This parent would like to see the children become more involved in the production and distribution of the newsletter.

Originally, nine teachers agreed to participate in the Classroom Newsletter activity. However, only one teacher from each of the grade levels, Kindergarten through Grade two, and two teachers from Grade Three (Total: 5 Teachers) actually returned completed PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION questionnaires upon the completion of the 12 week period, totalling 39 parent responses. Of these 39 responses 96% were considered positive. Parents were generally excited about knowing what their children were doing in school and especially in the classroom. They were particularly interested in calendars of coming events.

Most parents would like to see their children participating more in the construction of the newsletter itself. Some would like to see their children actually writing articles and making drawings to be included in the newsletter. They felt that

teachers needed a better layout of space, so that they could present more detail in articles mentioning student events. Some newsletters were typed or printed from a word processor with graphics. Parents were generally excited about this format, particularly if the students themselves provided the "color". Parents were happy to know skills that the teacher was stressing in class through the newsletter, so that they could work with their children at home. Some parents indicated that they would read the newsletter with their children, and that their children were proud that their parents were taking an interest in their classroom and activities. These parents felt that the newsletters gave their children a sense of importance, and helped to raise their self-esteem. Generally, 71% (28) of the parents would like newsletters to be issued weekly, and would like to see them mandated by the principals from Kindergarten through Grade 8.

Relatively speaking, the Gifted and Talented Workshop had the lowest ratings of any of the five parent activities. The G/T Workshop was the first of the series of four workshops requested by the parents in the Parent Survey. All of these workshops had been advertised on the local AM and FM radio station, as well as on the service bulletin section on public television, in local newspapers, and local church

bulletins, at least one week in advance. At the G/T Workshop the Director of Special Services gave his presentation which was warmly received by 80% of those in attendance. The remaining 20% were extremely disappointed by the absence of the G/T teacher who was unable to attend due to unforseen circumstances. These same two parents were quite bitter and vindictive in their commentary about the delivery of the workshop, leaving the author to wonder whether they had a "hidden agenda" motivating them. Both of these parents arrived one-half hour late for the workshops, and missed the explanation as to why the G/T teacher was not present as advertised.

On the positive side, most parents found the G/T Workshop "down-to-earth", "thorough and informative", and easy to understand. Most parents (80%) indicated that they would have liked to talk to the G/T teacher, and see a teacher presentation of typical lessons and activities. Most parents (70%) were generally satisfied with their involvement and the information received in this workshop, but felt they needed a follow-up workshop which would include the teacher, and possibly some students. Parents (70%) would also like handouts describing program criteria to be distributed in September or included in the school policy booklet received by all parents. Again, parents volunteered or

wanted more information about becoming part of a G/T Parent Advisory Committee to the School Board in order to influence board policy and decision making on G/T Program entrance criteria, district program planning and curriculum. Most parents (90%) would like a G/T Workshop which would describe the program components and particularly define program entrance criteria presented at the beginning of each school year.

During the Speech and Language Workshop parents said that they learned more about normal speech and language development and specific problems to look for in their children. They stated that the two presenters were well-prepared, relaxed and informative. All parents were impressed with the visual displays and demonstrations concerning language development and the recommended activities for promoting language, as well the written information which was disseminated. All parents in attendance were satisfied with their involvement in this activity. Two parents wished to make further contact with the Speech and Language Therapists in order to schedule evaluations for their children. Most parents would like to see a follow-up workshop in September or October.

Managing Children's Behavior was the workshop that obtained the most positive feedback and support from parents. Parents were happy to see that other parents

faced similar problems in dealing with behaviors of young children. They were very happy to find out that many of these behaviors were considered normal. Most parents were impressed with the positive alternatives presented by the two social workers to support parents. Most parents enjoyed the brainstorming, role-playing, and group participation and discussion techniques employed by, and particularly "getting-in-touch with their feelings" as several parents stated. Overall, parents found the handouts very practical and interesting. Most parents would like to see more workshops like this one where parents could share information with other parents in a group discussion under the guidance of a facilitator such as the school social worker or school psychologist. Most parents would like this workshop presented again, early in the school year.

Parents attending the Social and Emotional Development Workshop found it to be "informative" and "relaxing". According to their feedback, parents became more aware of what is normal or abnormal in social and emotional development. Some parents enjoyed relating personal experiences, and having the Psychologist comment about them. Most parents at this workshop (all female) were impressed with the Psychologist's reinforcement of the importance of the

mother's and father's attitude toward each of the children within the family unit, as well as understanding their parenting styles. Most parents were satisfied with their involvement in this activity, but would like workshop follow-up in the fall on such topics as self-concept, successful parenting, discipline, and peer relationships. Many parents in attendance were also greatly concerned about the issue of quality child care and would like this topic presented in a similar workshop. One parent summarized this workshop by saying that it "captured the attention of the mothers present in a very personal way".

Objective Two was measured by documented attendance reports from all Primary School Parent Meetings held during the March, April and May, 1988, practicum period. These were compared with parent meeting attendance immediately before and after the 12 week period. The specific objective, "During a period of 12 weeks, the Primary School parents will be encouraged to become more involved in the ongoing activities of the Primary School as measured by increased attendance at parent-teacher association meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and other group meetings, of a least 50%, as documented by a comparison of monthly meeting attendance reports before, during and after the implementation stage (Appendix H), was

not met for a majority of the parent meetings. Table 2 summarizes the results of the Attendance Records for each meeting held in February through June.

Table 2. Attendance Records

Activity	# Of Parents in Attendance: Feb.	March	April	May	June
PTA	7	No Mtg	6	No Mtg	No Mtg
P/T Conf.	----------Retention Conferences Only----------				
	----------No Scheduled Conferences----------				
Other:					
G/T Workshop	---	---	13	---	20
S/L Workshop	---	---	5	---	---
MCB Workshop	---	---	15	---	---
S/E Workshop	---	---	---	9	---
Active Parenting	---	---	12	10	---
Foreign Lang.Prog	---	---	19	---	---
Kindergart. Rd.Up/Orient.-		---	82	91	---
P2R Meetings -		---	4	---	---
Eligibility Meetings	4	6	3	6	5
IEP Annual Reviews	3	5	2	4	16

Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meeting attendance for the September Back-To-School Night was an outstanding 400 parents. At the time of this meeting there were 485 registered students (82%) Kindergarten through grades Three. Although exact records were not made available to this writer for the October, November and December meetings, the PTA President and Principal report that attendance dropped considerably, by over one-half for each subsequent meeting. Attendance surpassed 100/523 (19%) for the winter meeting entitled, "Art Goes to School" also sponsored by the PTA. At least 75/550 parents (13%) were on-hand at the December meeting for the presentation of awards for the PTA sponsored Christmas Greeting Card Contest. The records show only seven parents beside the PTA Officers (2%) attended the February Meetings and six at the April meeting (2%) when PTA Officer Elections were held for the 1988-1989 school year. Approximately 15 parents on the average attend the School Board Meetings monthly, but this includes parents of children from the other two school buildings in the district.

Parent-Teacher Conferences were held in late November, 1987, and were attended by 435 parents. Enrollment at the time in the Primary School was 552 (78%). In January, 1988, parents are notified by

letter, and oftentimes by telephone call of possible retentions. Parents who desired a conference are asked to contact the teacher. From January through June, 1988, parent-teacher conferences were held for individual students at teachers or parents requests. If the parent requested the meeting, attendance was 100%. When the teacher requested the meeting attendance approximated 80%, including a home visitation by the school principal when necessary to insure parent-school communication.

The school district is part of a state-wide, three year, pilot program begun July 1, 1987, to revise special education programming in the state. The district Plan to Revise Special Education (P2R) Training Specialist is currently involved in inservicing administration, staff and parents with regard to the new state law and pilot program to begin implementation during the 1988-89 school year. The P2R Training Specialist organized four different in-district inservices, a total of four primary school parents of children with special needs were in attendance at these meetings held in April, 1988.

Eligibility Meetings are held following initial evaluation or re-evaluation of potentially handicapped or handicapped children between the ages of 3 and 21. These meetings determine whether a student is eligible

or continues to be eligible for special services. Re-evaluation is accommplished every three years. During the practicum implementation period March 1, 1988, through May 27, 1988, there were 17 Eligibility Meetings held at the Primary School level and 15 meetings had at least one parent in attendance (88%). All parents are notified of these meetings by letter and oftentimes by a follow-up telephone call.

Individual Educational Plan or IEP Meetings immediately follow Eligibility Meetings where children are found to be Eligible for Special Services. IEP Reviews are held annually or when the parent or school feels it is necessary to update the student's program. During the practicum implementation period a total of 15 IEP Meetings were held at the Primary School. There were 11 meetings where at least one parent attended (73%). Parents are invited to these meetings in the same manner as the Eligibility Conferences.

Objective Three was measured by the author developed PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION form (Appendix G) which was used to evaluate Objective One. The specific objective, "During a period of 12 weeks, the Primary School parents will improve their general knowledge of parenting skills and become facilitators in their child's development as measured by attaining a 70% positive response for each parent activity on a

writer-developed parent involvement survey" was met by the small group of parents in attendance at the Active Parenting Workshops. Although ten persons had signed-up for the class, only six persons actually completed this workshop. Table 3 summarizes the results of the PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION form which was administered upon completion of the six week course (Activity #6).

Table 3. PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION Form Results #2

Activity	#Parents	% Rating			
	5	4	3	2	1
6	1	5	0	0	0

The three couples who completed the Active Parenting workshop enjoyed the husband and wife communication that ocurred in a non-threatening environment. Small group discussion focused on specific parenting issures and parents liked the chance to hear how other parents facing similar problems handled them. Parents did feel that there could be better integration of the video-tape with the actual discussions. Most indicated that there was much digression from the video topics presented, and that the demonstrative stories became repetitious. Parents

saw the Family Meetings idea as unrealistic because of time constraints.

Suggestions for improvement included the need for a more realistic video presentation with better integration of discussion and video. One parent wished she could have had this workshop when her children were younger. However, she stated that she may not have been able to attend for the same reasons that other parents did not get involved, because she "was either too tired at the end of the day from work and parenting or too pregnant!" Parents did feel that it was necessary to attend all six sessions to receive the most benefit from the program. Parents would like more participants, so that more small discussion groups could be formed, and more group discussion take place. One parent said that he did not participate enough, but felt he would have been more motivated to get involved had there been more people. Parents were willing to recruit others to future workshops it Active Parenting was to be offered again. One parent would like to see her child meet in like fashion with a group facilitator in an "Active Kidding" approach.

Conclusions

During the kindergarten through third grade acclimation period it is important for young children to orient themselves to their roles as both students and social beings within the school environment. The related literature shows us the significance of the parent's role in this process. Children's success in school is directly related to how they perceive their parents to be involved in their school activities (Henderson, 1987; Honig, 1987).

The first objective concerning increasing parents' knowledge and understanding of the programs offered in the Primary School was met well within the established guidelines as evidenced by the data presented in the Results section. Various activities were introduced in order to accomplish this objective. These activities included parent workshops, parent discussion groups, dissemination of printed materials, and distribution of weekly or bi-weekly classroom newsletters, and were warmly received by the parents.

Improving knowledge of parenting skills and becoming facilitators in their child's development was the third parent objective. Again, the objective was met for those parents who participated in the Active

Parenting video workshops, as well as the parent workshops on Social-Emotional Development and Managing Children's Behavior. Materials were also disseminated throughout the school during the practicum implementation period which advocated parenting skills.

The second objective to encourage parents to become more involved in the ongoing activities of the Primary School was measured by documentation of attendance at parent-teacher association meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and other local parent group meetings. Generally, parental attendance at meetings was poor throughout the implementation period. During the earlier part of the school year attendance at parent meetings was better than it had been in past years according to the school principal and PTA President. This could be attributed to the fact that many of the meetings in the fall were child-centered, in that the children were directly involved in the planning and presentation of many of the meetings. Back-To-School Nights usually draw a large number of parents who wish to meet their child's teacher and to visit the classroom. After December attendance at most parent meetings historically decline. Staff members feel that the parents lose interest or become complacent about their children's education because of

over-commitment to extra-curricular activities in the community, alternative life styles and work. Child Care was provided for all PTA meetings and most workshops, but this did not seem to make a difference as far as parental attendance is concerned. This writer received approximately 16 telephone calls or letters from parents following the practicum implementation period who were disappointed that they had not attended various workshops or had not participated in the parent involvement project in some way. These parents indicated that they would prefer not to bring their children out at night, particularly during the winter months. Most of these parents were single, working parents who were tired by the end of the day. After making sure their children were fed, bathed and put to bed at a reasonable hour, they often did not feel like going out to a meeting or needed the time to get housework or paperwork done. Others found it difficult to find quality in-home evening babysitting care, since they preferred not to take their children out. Still others came from two-parent households where both parents worked, and took turns staying home with the children. Some parents were reluctant to give-up their free time to attend a school meeting after working all day. The most common problem appeared to be parents who had overextended themselves,

and were involved in many extra-curricular activities, were under a great deal of internal or external stress or did not know how to prioritize and manage their time. Most parents requested that the workshops be reinstituted in the early fall before their yearly calendars became filled with other commitments.

This objective was not met in that attendance in general was not increased during the implementation period. However, it is felt by this author that the information obtained and the lessons learned regarding the family structures within the community will have future implications for planning of parental involvement in the school district.

Generally, parents are genuinely interested and can be actively involved in their children's educational programming. Children can be motivated through parent involvement in their classroom and school programs. Classroom activities can be initiated in the school and carried over into the home through parent involvement in newsletter briefings and homework assignment pad monitoring.

Parents can be motivated to attend and to be active participants in parent-teacher association meetings, parent-teacher conferences and other parent group meetings, when consideration is given on the

school's part to alternative life styles and time constraints. A commitment of time by parent and school personnel is essential to the success of any parent-teacher partnership.

The State program on parental involvement has emphasized the importance of the home environment in supporting the child's achievement in school. During its first year in operation the committee has peiodically distributed literature to parents which describes the importance of a child having her own place to study, having appropriate school supplies, proper nutrition, sufficient sleep, and rules which govern such things as appropriate amounts of recreation, TV, and homework time, all essential to a child's educational progress.

In analyzing parental response to the parent involvement activities, one can conclude that the practicum proved to be an overall positive experience for both teachers and parents who participated, despite poor attendance. Teachers indicated that the use of the classroom newsletters helped them to communicate better with the parents of the children in their classrooms. The parents rated newsletters as an excellent method for making parents aware of program goals and activities, as well as ongoing activities of

the Primary School program. Parents found the program workshops, information dissemination and parenting seminars to be very good, and offered specific and constructive suggestions for planning future workshops.

Recommendations

Parents can become partners in the educational process through consistent exchange of information, a sharing in the decision-making opportunities, helping out at school, and collaborating with teachers and their child in their child's learning. This can be accomplished best through a formulation of school district policies which include input from teachers, parents, and students similar to that which is included in this report.

Parent advocacy can be encouraged through advisory council participation. Parents should be partners in developing school policies and setting future priorities. Parent groups will in turn inform the community about school needs (Hill, 1981).

The results of this practicum and the review of the literature indicate parent involvement programs are most successful when they directly match the assessed needs and interests of the parents, the school and the child (Powell, 1983, 1986; Nedler & McAfee, 1979). The

parent survey, teacher questionnaire, and PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION results address the following program needs and goals for the future in the Primary School:

1) The primary school should consider the use of their facilities for community education and family services. A variety of parent education programs should be offered again to parents on such topics as parenting skills, discipline, nutrition, self-esteem, child development and advocacy. Timing of meetings and alternative life styles of parents should be a consideration.

2) Parents should be given more specific information with regard to academic year learning objectives, classroom/school activities, and more regular opportunities to discuss their child's progress. Weekly or bi-weekly newsletters could be made mandatory and regularly scheduled conferences be increased to at least twice yearly. Recorded messages about homework assignments and school activities would keep parents more informed. The Primary School could develop partnerships with the community-based organizations in order to reach out and bring in parents from diverse backgrounds.

Dissemination

Dissemination of abstracts and discussion of this practicum took place at the Practicum Poster Session in Washington, D.C. on Saturday, July 16, 1988, and will take place at the September 10, 1988, Cluster 26A meeting in Wilmington, Delaware. Further dissemination

of report and abstracts will take place following approval of the final report, in the October or November, 1988, Parent-Teacher Association Meeting in the Primary School.

Copies of the report will be forwarded to the administrators in the School District prior to the presentation. A copy of this practicum report will also be forwarded to the State Department of Education who is currently seeking descriptions of parent involvement programs within the state that are currently in existence to enhance their own campaign in parent involvement. If requested, the author will present this report before the state Parent Involvement Committee.

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APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

October 11, 1987

Dear Parents and Staff:

Parent involvement with a child's learning experiences has been long observed by school teachers as a vital factor in a child's school success. Parent-teacher interactions have been found to affect children's learning both positively and negatively. Research on teacher attitudes has shown that where teachers "exhibited greater respect than other teachers for the child's family" this was positively associated with the child's willingness to profit from classroom educational experiences (Beller, 1969, p.39).

During this school year I will be examining parent involvement within our school district, in particular within the Primary School setting. Our Superintendent, , has graciously granted his permission for me to undertake this first practicum component of my Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood under the watchful eye of , the Primary School Principal. The practicum process is an important part of my doctoral experience at Nova University. This aspect of the program gives me an opportunity to become a skilled problem-solver and to take a more active role in the improvement of a situation within my work setting, our school district.

During the preliminary stages I will be examining the literature on parent involvement in the early childhood experiences of their children, preparing a parent needs assessment, and surveying the Primary School staff members concerning their views on parent involvement. At this time I would like to request your assistance and cooperation in preparation of the parent needs assessment and staff survey by completing the attached form(s) and returning them to the primary school by October 16, 1987.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Ellen M. Wright, Ed.S.
Educational Specialist

APPENDIX B

PARENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

PARENT INVOLVEMENT
PRIMARY SCHOOL
NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Date: _____

A. Family Interest Inventory

Please draw a circle around the services that you find most helpful to you as a parent. Circle both the number and the letter.

Put an * by the services which you feel should be provided, and are not being provided at the present time. Please * both the number and the letter.

1. Parent Group Meetings/Support Groups
   a. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
   b. Local Chapter of the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities
   c. Parent Workshops/Seminars
   d. Parent Discussion Groups
   e. Parent Group Counselling

2. "Parents Are Teachers Too"
   a. Parent Volunteer in the Classroom/School
   b. Share your job or talent with your child(ren)'s class.

3. Resources and Printed Materials for Parents with Alternate Lifestyles
   a. For the very young parent
   b. For the Divorced or Single Parent
   c. Other alternative lifestyles: _____

4. Newsletters
   a. District Newsletter
   b. Primary School Principal's letters
   c. Classroom Newsletter
   d. Parent/Student Handbook

5. Conferences
   1. Telephone conferences
      a. Initiated by the teacher
      b. Initiated by the parent
      c. Initiated by the principal
   2. Parent-Teacher Conferences
   3. Eligibility for Special Services Conferences
   4. Individual Educational Program (IEP) Conferences
   5. Time
      a. M-F, during the 9AM-3PM school day
      b. M-F, after school time, 3-7 P.M.
      c. Other: _____
   6. Individual Parent or Family Counselling

6. Other: _____
   1. _____
   2. _____

Please suggest days and times that would probably be convenient for you to come to school. _____

_____

_____

Please let us know what days and times you would probably <u>not</u> be able to come to school. _____

_____

_____

As a parent what do you expect to get out of greater involvement in your child(ren)'s school and class program? _____

_____

_____

_____

I am a member of the PTA YES____ NO_____

B. Please put a * by the things you would like to do most this school year:

_____ Watch and talk about movies on activities of young children.
_____ Talk about making and using home-made toys and toys which can be purchased at the store.
_____ Have speakers on topics of interest such as:
- _____ Kindergarten and Transitional Programs
- _____ Managing children's behavior
- _____ Helping your children use the public library and getting books by mail.
- _____ Services available from the local & county health department.
- _____ Ideas on preparing nutritional (and good) snacks and meals for children.
- _____ Speech/Language development
- _____ Social-emotional development
- _____ Cognitive/Intellectual development
- _____ Play as Learning
- _____ Learning Styles
- _____ The Gifted & Talented Program
- _____ The Special Education Program
- _____ The Sunshine Laws
- _____ The Chapter One Program
- _____ After School Programs
- _____ The Eligibility Conference and the Individual Educational Program (IEP)
- _____ Mainstreaming your special needs child
- _____ Extra-curricular activities
- _____ Other: _____

C. Parent(s) of Child(ren) with Special Needs (Only)

1. As you see it, in what areas does your child need the most help? _____

2. What do you feel that your child will accomplish by the end of this school year? _____

3. What do you feel you can do to help your child reach his/her goals? _____

4. Has anyone explained your child's learning problems? Yes _____ No _____

5. If the answer is NO, do you want to know? Yes _____ No _____

6. If the answer is YES, do you understand what was told to you? Yes _____ No _____

7. Who in your child's family would be willing to know more about your child's learning problem and help your child? Sister _____ Father _____ Brother _____ Mother _____ Grandparents _____ Aunt _____ Uncle _____ Friend _____

APPENDIX C

STAFF SURVEY

STAFF SURVEY
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
PARENT INVOLVEMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

GRADE LEVEL: _____ DATE: _____

YES or NO

1. Parent Involvement is a problem in the Primary School. Yes_____ No_____

2. I send home classroom newsletters. Yes_____ No_____ If yes, Daily_____ Weekly_____ Monthly_____

3. Parent Attendance at Parent Conferences in my classroom are over 70%. Yes_____ No_____

4. I am a member of the PTA. Yes_____ No_____

In your opinion, what types of responsibility are parents presently willing and able to accept?

1) For the PTA & other current parent activities:

2) For their children (Parent Conferences, Report Card Review, Eligibility/IEP Meetings):

3) The two most important needs of parents as I see it are:

1.

2.

4) Two ways which I believe the staff can help parents learn to meet these needs are:

1.

2.

APPENDIX D

STATE COMMISSIONER'S LETTER

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

September, 1987

Dear Colleague:

This fall, Governor and the Department of Education will kick off a statewide program to enhance public awareness of the importance of parental support to students' achievement.

Phase one of the program, a multi-media promotion scheduled for mid-October, will urge parents to make a commitment to their children's education. The message will encourage parents to keep a learning environment in the home by:

- Setting a quiet place for study;
- Checking homework every night;
- Ensuring children a full night's sleep;
- Arranging for children to arrive at school on time;
- Talking with children about home and school events;
- Spending time with children in reading activities.

Later this year, you will hear more about phase two--recognition of successful, existing programs, and phase three--pilot projects to increase parent involvement in selected schools.

I believe that this initiative is exciting for all of us concerned about education. It is an opportunity to be creative, to think of ways of establishing more parent involvement for your students.

I look forward to a good school year with more and more enthusiastic support from parents for your excellent efforts.

Sincerely,

Commissioner

APPENDIX E

PARENTS NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

PARENT INVOLVEMENT
PRIMARY SCHOOL
NEEDS ASSESSMENT
RESULTS

Date: October 30, 1987

504 Distributed
178 Responses (35%)

A. Family Interest Inventory

The following percentages represent the number of parents who did not feel that the service was being provided by the school or who felt that the current services offered in the individual areas were not adequate.

11% (20) 1. Parent Group Meetings/Support Groups
03% (06) a. Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)
02% (05) b. Local Chapter of the Association for Children and Adults with Learning Disabilities
57% (103) c. Parent Workshops/Seminars
29% (52) d. Parent Discussion Groups
33% (60) e. Parent Group Counselling

33% (60) 2. "Parents Are Teachers Too"
(01% (2) Did not feel Parents are Teachers)
32% (58) a. Parent Volunteer in the Classroom/School
04% (08) b. Share your job or talent with your child(ren)'s class.

38% (68) 3. Resources and Printed Materials for Parents with Alternate Lifestyles
07% (13) a. For the very young parent
25% (46) b. For the Divorced or Single Parent
c. Other alternative lifestyles:
Write-ins
14% (26) - Undefined
13% (24) - Working Parents (02% (5) of these indicated that they were single parents who worked "grave shifts".
13% (24) - Step Parents
01% (03) - Middle Age Parents Concerns
03% (07) - Transient Families (Move A Lot)
04% (08) - Newcomers to Area: Unaware of Program Availability

13% (24) 4. Newsletters
05% (09) a. District Newsletter
06% (11) b. Primary School Principal's letters
42% (76) c. Classroom Newsletter

34% (62) d. Parent/Student Handbook

03% (07) 5. Conferences
10% (19) 1. Telephone conferences
10% (18) a. Initiated by the teacher
05% (09) b. Initiated by the parent
02% (04) c. Initiated by the principal
15% (28) 2. Parent-Teacher Conferences (Time Availablity)
05% (10) 3. Eligibility for Special Services Conferences
07% (13) 4. Individual Educational Program (IEP) Conferences
17% (32) 5. Time Problems
15% (27) a. M-F, during the 9AM-3PM school day only
32% (58) b. M-F, after school time, 3-7 P.M. only
c. Write-Ins:
15% (28) - Anytime with Sufficient Notice
07% (13) - No Response
29% (52) - Various conference times needed other than listed above due to work schedules (Includes 01% (2) for before school hours).

12% (23) 6. Individual Parent or Family Counselling

6. Write-Ins:
03% (07) 1. Parents would like assistance/information on dealing with parent/child frustrations over child not understanding why working parents cannot find time to help out in classroom/school.
06% (12) 2. Would like regular monthly meetings on Child Neglect/Abuse Information & Counselling
01% (2) 3. Would like the school to request parental input and permission before testing and placement into special programs (In both cases the program mentioned was the PACE program).

As a parent what do you expect to get out of greater involvement in your child(ren)'s school and class program? (18 definitive responses. Some gave two or more answers).

82%	(147)	1.	Expect to understand better what happens in my child(ren)'s class/school activities or programs.
51%	(92)	2.	To become more aware of school/classroom curriculum/What child(ren) are being taught/How child(ren) are being taught.
50%	(89)	3.	Better Communication (Meetings/Talking with):
	20% (37)		- Parent/School (General)
	24% (43)		- Parent/Teacher
	01% (03)		- Child(ren)/Peer(s)
	03% (06)		- Teacher/Child(ren)
46%	(83)	4.	To gain in knowledge and understanding of parenting skills, ie. understanding and managing behavior, understanding and encouraging children, communication, confidence, respect, etc...
44%	(79)	5.	To help my child grow in self-esteem, enthusiasm, motivation and interest for school.
43%	(77)	6.	To observe how my child(ren) function(s) away from the home environment/interactions with peers and teachers throughout the school day.
32%	(57)	7.	Help my child(ren) to learn, to understand and to enjoy schoolwork more.
26%	(47)	8.	To learn how to share more with my child(ren)/grow closer to him/her.
24%	(44)	9.	To become more aware/knowledgeable of student and parent expectations by school/teacher.
21%	(38)	10.	"I wish I didn't have to work, but I do"/Child Care Problems/Single Parent/"Not enough time"/Want to be more involved/Want child(ren) more involved.
19%	(35)	11.	Help my child(ren) make a better adjustment to school/classmates/ teacher.
16%	(29)	12.	Want greater knowledge/awareness of child(ren)'s progress, abilities and

classroom/school needs, ie. skills, social-emotional, etc...

10% (18) 13. To learn ways/methods of improving and increasing quality time with child(ren).

03% (12) 14. More individualized instruction

02% (05) 15. A well-educated child

01% (02) 16. An intelligent child

01% (02) 17. For my child to get out of those trailors.

01% (02) 18. No response.

I am a member of the PTA YES 40% (72) NO 57% (102)
-2% (03) of NO responses said, "I don't have the money to join."
-13% (14) of NO responses felt that the PTA was a "political" or "elite" or "cliquish" group who were "...not representative of the truly concerned parents."

B. Percentage of activities that parents would like to do most this school year:

06% (12) Watch and talk about movies on activities of young children.

05% (10) Talk about making and using home-made toys and toys which can be purchased at the store.

44% (79) Have speakers on topics of interest such as:

40% (72) The Gifted & Talented Program
38% (68) Social-emotional development
35% (63) Speech/Language development
32% (68) Managing children's behavior
32% (68) Ideas on preparing nutritional (and good) snacks and meals for children.
29% (53) After School Programs
26% (47) Play as Learning
25% (46) Extra-curricular activities
-03% (06) More E-C Activities for Girls 7-10
20% (47) Learning Styles
18% (33) Kindergarten and Transitional Programs
16% (29) Cognitive/Intellectual development
14% (26) Services available from the local & county health department.
12% (23) Helping your children use the public library and getting books by mail.
12% (22) The Eligibility Conference and the

Individual Educational Program (IEP)
(An additional 12% (23) said that they had no idea what Sunshine Laws, Chapter One, Eligibility Conferences and IEP Meetings are.)

10% (18) The Special Education Program
07% (13) The Sunshine Laws
07% (13) Mainstreaming your special needs child
06% (11) The Chapter One Program

Write-Ins:

32% (57) -Working Parents/Family
20% (37) -School/Classroom Program/Activity Availability/Awareness
16% (29) -Principal/Parent Advisory Council/Committee (not through PTA)/ Alternating concerned parents on volunteer basis.
14% (26) -Time Management for Parents/Families
09% (17) -Step-Parenting Education
08% (16) -Child Safety: To & From School, etc..
08% (16) -Drug/Alcohol Abuse Programs, NA, AA
07% (13) -Checked nothing
03% (06) -After school Homework Clinic or Clinic for Parents to help child(ren) at home or to volunteer at a clinic at school.
02% (04) -Speak, Read and Write a Foreign Language and would appreciate programs which could include them (Two Spanish speaking, two other).
01% (03) -Teaching Black History
01% (02) -Child PlayGroups (Drama) and more constructive after school programs.

C. Parent(s) of Child(ren) with Special Needs (Only)

Of 504 students 17% or 32 are students with special needs. These 32 were given this fourth page. Six or 18% of these assessments were returned. One of the six returned was by a parent who has two special needs students in the Primary School (7 or 21%). One of the six returned was not completed.

1. As you see it, in what areas does your child need the most help?
   - 57% (4) - To better understand the material presented to him/her.
   - 42% (3) - Reading and Writing Skills
   - 14% (1) - Math
   - 28% (2) - Concentration, Self-Control/Behavior Management

2. What do you feel that your child will accomplish by the end of this school year?
   - 57% (4) - Gain confidence in him/herself
   - 28% (2) - Better skills in reading, spelling and math.
   - 28% (2) - Better understanding of how and what to study.

3. What do you feel you can do to help your child reach his/her goals?
   - 28% (2) - Help him/her with reading.
   - 42% (3) - Read to him/her more.
   - 57% (4) - Be more consistent & firm with homework, positive reinforcement and discipline.
   - 42% (3) - Work together, teacher-parent, school-parent as we are doing now.

4. Has anyone explained your child's learning problems? Yes 71% (5) No 0% (0) NA 29% (2)

5. If the answer is NO, do you want to know?
   Yes _____ No _____ NA 100% (7)

6. If the answer is YES, do you understand what was told to you? Yes 71% (5) No 0% (0) NA 29% (2)

7. Who in your child's family would be willing to know more about your child's learning problem and help your child? Sister 0 Father 3 (42%) Brother 1 (14%)
Mother 0 Grandparents 0 Aunt 0
Uncle 0 Friend 0.

APPENDIX F

STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

STAFF SURVEY
IN CONJUNCTION WITH
PARENT INVOLVEMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT
RESULTS

DATE: October 30, 1987

35 Staff Members
23 Responded (65%)

YES or NO

1. Parent Involvement is a problem in the Primary School. Yes 60% (14) No 40% (9)

2. I send home classroom newsletters. Yes 34% (8) No 47% (11) NA 17% (4) If yes, Daily 0 Weekly 12% (1) Bi-Weekly 12% (1) Monthly 75% (6).

3. Parent Attendance at Parent Conferences in my classroom are over 70%. Yes 43% (10) No 39% (9) NA 17% (4)

4. I am a member of the PTA.
Yes 60% (14) No 40%(9)

In your opinion, what types of responsibility are parents presently willing and able to accept?

1) For the PTA & other current parent activities:

- 30% (7) Helping with Class Trips
- 30% (7) Helping with parties
- 26% (6) Helping with Fund Raisers
- 21% (5) Room Mothers
- 17% (4) Running School Library
- 13% (3) Develop & present programs, ie "Art goes to School".
- 13% (3) No Response
- 08% (2) Back-To-School Night
- 08% (2) Very Few Willing to Help
- 04% (1) Classroom Help
- 04% (1) Anything
- 04% (1) Riding School Bus
- 04% (1) Homework Help
- 04% (1) Home Behavior Modification/Follow-up

2) For their children (Parent Conferences, Report Card Review, Eligibility/IEP Meetings):

- 52% (12) Parent Conference (1 by telephone)
- 39% (9) IEP Meetings (1 noted, not well attended)
- 34% (8) Eligibility Conferences
- 30% (7) Little Responsibility (2 especially parents who have children with special needs)
- 26% (6) Above average students (Parents very interested, noted 2).
- 26% (6) Help with homework
- 17% (4) Parents not responsive to any of the above
- 13% (3) No Response by staff
- 13% (3) BSIP Parent Meetings/Poor attendance
- 08% (2) Parent Responsibility for their children

3) The two most important needs of parents as I see it are:

39% (9) 1. Parents need to spend more quality time with their children/interest in their children.
30% (7) 2. Parenting Skills
21% (5) 3. Develop self-esteem in their children, increase importance through academic capability
17% (4) 4. Regular involvement with homework
17% (4) 5. Regular contact/communication with teacher through conferences, report cards, telephone calls, notes, etc...
13% (3) 6. Be home for child(ren)/be aware of their needs.
13% (3) 7. Instill values, respect, manners, discipline
13% (3) 8. Supporting School Programs
08% (2) 9. Support services: counseling, transportation, etc...
08% (2) 10. Encouragement and motivation for home/school responsibilities.
08% (2) 11. Review daily classwork.
04% (1) 12. Inservices to clarify handicapping conditions, services available and testing involved.
04% (1) 13. Solve problems of single parents/ latchkey children/work schedules.
04% (1) 14. Realize stress and responsibility of older students who are responsible for younger siblings and multiple home responsibilities.

04% (1) 15. Child care facilities
04% (1) 16. Limit Child(ren)'s TV Watching

4) Two ways which I believe the staff can help parents learn to meet these needs are:

73% (17) 1. Sharing information, materials, activities, ideas, on parenting newsletters, handouts, pamplets.
56% (13) 2. Videos, inservices, workshops on parenting
39% (9) 3. Increase Communication
17% (4) 4. More availability to parents
08% (2) 5. Feels that staff can do little about helping parents because of work schedules, time management problems, child care problems, etc...
08% (2) 6. Parents-Teachers working together on projects, field trips, and professional-parent meetings.
04% (1) 7. The Parent Tips Booklet, created by the Primary School teachers.
04% (1) 8. Find a way to create an interest in what children are doing.
04% (1) 9. Helping parents find good child care.
04% (1) 10. Provide counseling for children to express anxieties and to develop coping skills.

APPENDIX G

PARENT INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION

PARENT ACTIVITY: _____

DATE: _____

Directions: Please answer the questions in the space provided.

1. What did you like most about his activity?

_____

_____

2. What did you like least about this activity?

_____

_____

3. What do you feel would improve this activity? Please suggest some ways.

_____

_____

4. Please check one or more. As a result of this activity, I...

____ am satisfied with my involvement.

____ need more information.

____ desire a conference with the teacher.

____ need assistance from staff.

____ need assistance from other parents (group discussion)

____ need a workshop (or follow-up workshop)

____ other (please specify) _____

_____

_____

My overall rating for this activity is (Please circle one):

5	4	3	2	1
Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor

Additional Comments: _____

_____

_____

Your Name (Optional): _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Please return to your child's teacher or to the facilitator. Thank You for your cooperation in this project.

Ellen M. Wright, Ed.S.
Parent Program Facilitator

APPENDIX H

PARENT SIGN-IN SHEET

ACTIVITY: _____

DATE: _____

NAMES	NAMES

APPENDIX I

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION SHEET

:09

NEWSLETTERS

According to Gotts and Purnell (1985), the newsletter is "... an effective way to communicate general information to a wide audience." Studies show that a "... quality newsletter is the single most effective way of reaching parents whose children attend a particular school building." For most parents, a message seems more personalized when it comes from "my child's school." On the other hand, "... a newsletter from the school board office serves better as a public information source for the general community (p.11).

Studies show that a "... large majority of parents read and act on the information provided in newsletters. They are upset if news of school events comes too late. A welcome feature on the first page of the newsletter is a monthly calendar of upcoming events. Articles and news items should be prepared in a brief, clear style. They should be informative. Personal messages and viewpoints from school staff are welcome. The cover page might also include a box highlighting what is in the issue (Gotts & Purnell, p.11)."

"In laying out the newsletter pages use such visual devices as headlines, good spacing between items, and simple illustrations to make the newsletter more appealing and to help the readers find what may interest them. Eye-catching illustrations called clip art are available in kits from Creative Art Productions, 22552 King Richard Court, Birmingham, MI 48010. Inexpensive collections of borders and clip art are available from Dover Publications, 31 East 2nd St., Mineola, NY 11501. Lettering stencils from an art supply shop round out the materials needed for preparing a professional looking product (Gotts & Purnell, p. 12). Computer programs such as Apple Print Shop also provides interesting artwork.

In many elementary schools the principal writes and edits the letter with input from each classroom. "No matter who contributes to the newsletter, the editor must have the final say about content and quality (Gotts & Purnell, p.12). The newsletter should be positive, without overselling the school's or classroom's strengths and virtues.

The newsletter should include (but not limited to):

1) Information about activities in school; everyday routines as well as special events.

2) Home activities to supplement the school programs, such as suggestions for home projects, recipes for cooking with children, seasonal activities.

3) Information about local resources for children and their families. Community services as well as recreational facilities of interest to young children and their parents.

4) Notice of parent meetings and discussion group meetings

5) Interesting books, movies or magazine articles for parents, as well as children.

6) A "Parent Exchange", notice about children's clothes, furniture, toys, or services such as transportation, before and after school child care and/or babysitting services available.

7) Health, safety and nutrition information.

8) Requests for parent help in making materials, donating materials for classroom use, decorating the classroom, building play equipment, volunteers, etc...

9) A "Meet the Staff" section can help the parents to learn more about the persons who are working with their children daily.

10) A message from the teacher

(Benjamin, E., Ohanian, A., & White, W., 1975; Gotts & Purnell, 1985; and Hill, 1981.)

APPENDIX J

MEMO TO PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

MEMORANDUM

TO: PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

FROM: ELLEN WRIGHT, LDS

DATE: MAY 18, 1988

RE: PARENT INVOLVEMENT - PRACTICUM PRIMARY SCHOOL

I would like to ask that those of you who volunteered to send newsletters home throughout this three month practicum period, now evaluate this activity. Several of you had indicated in early March that you were sending newsletters home, or that you would begin to send newsletters home. If you participated in this activity please send home a copy of the evaluation form to each parent in your classroom and ask them to return it as soon as possible, but no later than Friday, May 27, 1988, so that their input may be counted in the final results.

This is the final activity in the three month practicum. Thank you all for your cooperation in assisting me in completing my practicum requirements. You have all been most helpful in providing information relevant to this practicum. I will be sharing the results of this first practicum with the primary staff and parents in the fall.

Thank you again for your support.